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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3235

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 5496

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 3219

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3084

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY

RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3739

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000974

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, INL/AAE BUHLER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: SNAR PGOV KCRM SOCI TX

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: NEW COUNTER NARCOTICS CHIEF BROUGHT FROM
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: On July 29th, President Berdimuhamedov replaced the Acting Chief of the State Counter-Narcotics Service (SCNS) of Turkmenistan with the Deputy Minister of National Security. No background information is yet available about the new appointee. USG program implementers are waiting to see whether the current smooth working relationship with the SCNS will continue under its new leadership. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (U) President Berdimuhamedov convened a session of the State Security Council (SSC) on July 29th to assess the work of Turkmenistan's law-enforcement and military organs during the last seven months. Following the session, the President signed decree appointing Aman Allanurovich Garayev as the new Chief of the State Counter-Narcotics Service, transferring him from the position of Deputy Minister of National Security. Garayev holds the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. No background information is yet available on him, and he has not had prior contact with the Embassy. Garayev's appointment received minimal media coverage. No biographic information about him was published in the press, nor was his swearing-in ceremony broadcast on the nightly WATAN news. It is also unclear how long Garayev had been Deputy Minister at the Ministry of National Security (MNB), as that appointment was also not publicized. There is no record of Garayev's having participated in a USG exchange program, although he reportedly has traveled to Afghanistan on a UNODC-funded visit.

¶4. (SBU) The visiting European Union Troika delegation met with Garayev on July 30. According to delegation members, Garayev read from a prepared text and was unable to answer any of their questions. All questions were referred to an SCNS official who was also present. Troika delegation members described Garayev in the meeting as being akin to a deer in the headlights.

¶5. (U) Since January 2009, the SCNS had been operating under the leadership of Major Serdar Batyrov, who was appointed as the Acting Chief after Colonel Myrat Yslamov was appointed head of the State

Border Service. Batyrov, who is 32 years old, had spent over eight years in different positions at the Ministry of National Security before becoming the First Deputy Chief of the SCNS in 2008. During his time at the SCNS, Batyrov twice participated in USG-funded study tours on counter-narcotics, and had developed favorable working relationships with Embassy personnel. The decree announcing Batyrov's dismissal cited his "transfer to another assignment." According to a contact at the SCNS, he was transferred back to the Ministry of National Security.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: As one UNODC staff member noted today, Batyrov's transfer had been anticipated for some time. His communication and leadership skills were considered insufficient to lead the SCNS. Meanwhile, the appointment of an MNB officer to the leadership of the SCNS is consistent with prior appointments. All mid- to top-level executive positions within the agency are currently occupied by MNB officers on detail to the SCNS. The new appointment may complicate bilateral cooperation in counternarcotics projects. It remains to be seen whether Garayev's MNB background and lack of experience with assistance programs will make him cautious about bilateral cooperation. END COMMENT.

MILES